

Madras (now Chennai) is the largest metropolitan city in the south of India. It is also the capital of the state of Tamilnadu (which means Tamil land after the language spoken there). I visited Madras this June on a holiday and naturally went pen hunting. The pen shops in Madras (that I know of atleast) are concentrated in the Parry's area on NSC Bose road opp. Kurulagam(the Government run Arts and Handicraft emporium).

The most promienent shop there is the **Gem and Company** who have been in business for the last 80 years. I have visited this shop in the past and first came to know about it from my late grandfather who had purchased his Sheaffer vac-o-fill tuckaways from them.

Well, when I visited the shop this time, I was welcomed by Mr. Pratap Kumar who is the owner of this establishment. He is the grandson of Mr. M.C. Cunnan who started this store, and till a few years back the shop was being managed by Mr. Pratap's father Mr. M. Prabhat Kumar. Gem and Company have an illustrious past as one of the largest pen stores in the south of India and were representing major brands of the day like Pelikan, Parker and Sheaffer. They were also the authorised repair center for these brands and still hold a huge inventory of spare parts including parts for vintage Mont Blanc pens. They were also the main dealers for the Madras based Pilot pen company and their own brand the [GAMA](#) pen. The shop has been re-laid now, and I remember in the past when they had still kept installed wooden Pelikan pen display cases. Gem and company deals exclusively in pens, ballpens, inks and refills only and carry no other stationery items.

Gem and Co as seen from the entrance of Kurulagam:





Mr. Pratap Kumar at the counter



The shop crowded with customers who still buy Fountain pens



Sheaffer Shop display



Pelikan Shop display; pls excuse the poor focus...



Some GAMA handturned acrylic desk pens



Some mini ED GAMA celluloid pens





A few shops away from Gem and Company towards Rattan Bazaar is a shop called **The Pen Corner**, they had the entire range of Wality pens and GAMA pens on display.



Krishna Mart is also nearby and I had bought my [Madras Ebonites](#) from them.



Adjacent to the left of The Pen Corner is a shop called **KN Perumall Chetty**, a fairly large shop.



They had some Ebonite pens at fantastic prices similar to the ones that I had picked up from Krishna Mart.



These are the brief results of my survey of pen shops in the Parry's area, I am sure there are many other good pen shops in Madras, just a matter of proper exploration.

Cheers,

Hari

(First Posted on [FPN](#) by hari317 on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2008)

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Four and a half years after my [last visit to Madras \(Chennai\)](#), came a chance to visit the city again, in the middle of January this year for one week. I was desirous to meet up with my pen purveyor, the soft spoken, genial and humble L. Subramaniam of ASAPens. He enthusiastically agreed to show me some of the pen shops that he himself frequents. We spent some good and fruitful time discussing pens, meeting a pen and watch collector and seeing the pen shops.

Of course, we visited Gem and Co at Parry's.



The Gem and Co. trio



Along with Subramaniam standing on the far right



The display cases



Subramaniam checking out a displayed newspaper clipping about Gem and Co.





The Madras High Court as seen from Gem and Co

Of Course, Pratap showed off some of his beauties, this set of perfectly machined acrylic desk pens:





Also some rare to see sights for the casual pen collector:



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Vials of genuine nib tipping balls from WC Heraeus, Germany, wish I could show you folks their nib retipping setup...

Some apparently original Parker USA repair equipment:



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Nib knockout block



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Vac wrench with a serial number

Over the years, the shop had accumulated a pile of junker Parker pens. Pratap apparently decided to use up at least some part of this pile to make a batch of bodies matching the Parker Vacumatic caps in his possession.



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There is more, but maybe in a later post.

Cheers!

Hari

(First posted at [FPN](#) by hari317 on 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2014 )